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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001363

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/25/2019

TAGS: KDEM KREL PTER PGOV PHUM I2

SUBJECT: PRT DIYALA: SUNNI ARAB PC MEMBER ARRESTED

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1294

1B. BAGHDAD 1070

1C. BAGHDAD 899

1D. BAGHDAD 544

1E. BAGHDAD 64

1F. BAGHDAD 49

Classified By: PRT Leader George White for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is a PRT Diyala Reporting Cable.

SUMMARY

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1. C) Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) reputed to be from the Prime Minister's Counter Terrorism Bureau arrested Diyala Provincial Council (PC) member Abd Al Jabbar, a Sunni Arab, on May 18 following a stand-off at the PC Building in Ba'aquibah. The Diyala Governor and PC subsequently condemned the GOI action, with PC members approving a formal resolution outlining their specific concerns. The arrest could stymie the work of the newly-elected PC, just as it was beginning to revive itself as a political institution in Diyala. Sunni Arabs view this arrest as the latest attempt by the Government of Iraq (GOI) to limit Sunni Arab political aspirations. END SUMMARY

12. (C) At about 12:30 pm on May 18, during an official session of the Diyala PC, a force believed to be from Prime Minister Maliki's office executed an arrest warrant against Abd al Jabbar Ali Ibrahim Al Khazraji, a Sunni Arab PC member and the Ba'aquibah head of the Tawafuq/Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) bloc. The arrest warrant was issued on May 17 by the Al-Karkh Court of First Instance in Baghdad; it charged Abd Al Jabbar for terrorist acts under Article 4. CPT Husham's unit cordoned off the PC Building and a stand-off ensued. At approximately 4:00 pm, the ISF took Abd Al Jabbar into custody; reports indicate that he was transferred to a detention center in Baghdad.

13. (C) The PC strongly condemned the actions of the PM's office in the arrest of Abd Al Jabbar, believing the terrorism charges against him completely false. Initially, the PC members were considering suspending their membership in the Council in protest of the arrest. They opted instead for a written resolution renouncing the actions of the GOI forces. All 24 PC members in attendance (including members of the Iraqi National Project, Kurdistan Alliance (KA), and Diyala National Coalition (ISCI) blocs) concurred with the resolution.

14. (C) Diyala Governor Abd Al Nasir Al Muntasirbillah and the Diyala Operations Center (DOC) Commander also came to the Council Building to join the PC in condemning the arrest. Moreover, the Governor and PC Chairman conducted a press conference on May 18 to publicly state their objections. The PC formed an official delegation comprised of the Governor and eight PC members that traveled to Baghdad on May 20 to present their concerns to GOI Vice Presidents Tariq Al Hashimi and Adel Abd Al Mahdi.

AFTERMATH

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¶5. (SBU) PC members are concerned that Abd Al Jabbar's arrest will have a chilling effect on the work of the PC, and negative ramifications among the Diyala public. The head of the PC's Integrity (anti-corruption) Committee told the PRT that he was afraid to do the committee's work combating corruption for fear of arrest. Several PC members said they can no longer feel secure in publicly airing their opinions, or attending sessions at the Council building. PC members claim that following the provincial elections in January ordinary citizens believed that the Provincial Government could effectively represent their interests and address their needs. Officials now warn that many Sunnis will be disillusioned and could return to violence.

COMMENT

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¶6. (C) PC members think this arrest is part of a larger trend of persecution of PM Maliki's real and potential political foes (specifically Sunni Arabs) in Diyala, and Qpolitical foes (specifically Sunni Arabs) in Diyala, and maintain that it is intended purely to limit Sunni Arab political power and intimidate Sunni Arabs (refs). Abd Al Jabbar's arrest is a blow to what seemed to be a normalization of the political process in Diyala (ref B), and highlights the GOI's problems in applying the rule of law and dealing with opposition sects or ethnic groups (ref A). END COMMENT.

HILL